

They certainly were, Mr Wells, for several years, among them And why not, one might ask At the same time, this point about the food deserves a word, since many visitors to 41 did undoubtedly come away with the impression that they had not had enough to eat Perhaps they had not, in those days when by our slimmer standards, so many people ate too much There also were stages when she was trying some new diet fad, and, of course, imposed it that she knows better than other people what is good for them, is the conviction of hers that has caused more trouble than any other In general the food was very plain, and you took what was offered there were no choices Food undoubtedly figured in the chapter of economies But my own impression is that, if there was nothing specially tempting either to eye or palate about the table, the food was there After all, Mrs Webb retained the same two maids almost throughout her married life, and maids do not stay where there is not enough to eat Part perhaps of the reason why some visitors felt hungry is that not only does she herself eat extraordinarily little (there are friends to-day who hold that, partly out of sheer asceticism, she starves herself), but both host and hostess eat extraordinarily fast, even when they are talking so that it often happened that plates were being cleared away before slower jaws had emptied them, far less asked for more The time actually spent at table was cut to a minimum They both wanted to be talking

that, rather
than eating, was what meals were for And
the talk was
not of the kind to assist digestion for the
ordinary mortal
It was good talk, no question about that,
much better
talk than is generally achieved when
numbers of dis-
tinguished persons are assembled It was
about interesting
topics, and had a strong feel of reality and
central import-
ance, something might even "come of it "
Mrs* Webb,
in particular, if a poor listener, not only talks
with keenness,